

EXHIBIT

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269

To: Judicial Committee, Montana House of Representatives

From: Sharon Sweeney Fee, RN, PhD

Re: HB 269 Violence Against Healthcare Workers

I am a Nurse Informatics Specialist and Education Coordinator at Livingston Healthcare. I am currently the Board Liaison for the MNA Committee on Policy and Government Activities and the past Chair of the ANA Ethics Advisory Board. In my work with the Nursing Associations I know that 50% of nurses surveyed have experienced workplace violence. Without clear judicial guidelines that this violence is an offense with defined consequences, I do not see how we can expect the incidents to decrease.

On a personal note, one nurse I work with shared her story which clearly demonstrates the need for this bill. She was punched and knocked out by a patient in the ER, bruising her face so much that days later patients asked her if she needed help getting away from an abusive husband. She told me part of the sentence for the patient that hit her was to come to the hospital and apologize. She then told me that she was glad she was never working on the 2 times he made an attempt to do so.

I know of no other crime where the sentence is to return to the site of the attack and meet the victim in an unprotected environment. Without a clear understanding that this type of violence is assault, with judicial guidelines, how many more nurses must experience this type of repeated indignity?

I thank you for your consideration of this bill.